

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HA-05
MCT-01 EB-08 COME-00 DOE-11 SOE-02 DOEE-00 SSO-00
/127 W

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P R 171515Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7148
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1457

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 10-16

REF: BEIRUT 1297 (DTG 101600Z MAR 78)

1. THIS IS THE REGULAR WEEKLY ROUND-UP. DAILY SITREPS COVER THE
ISRAELI INVASION IN DETAIL.

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2. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN RETALIATION FOR A FATAH ATTACK BETWEEN TEL
AVIV AND HAIFA, ISRAELI FORCES MOVED INTO LEBANON ALONG SEVERAL
AXES. NEITHER THE SYRIANS NOR THE LEBANESE FRONT HAVE SHOWN ANY
SIGNS OF JOINING THE FIGHTING ON THE GROUND. PRESIDENT SARKIS
CONDEMNED THE ISRAELI ATTACK AS UNJUSTIFIED. THE SECURITY SITU-
ATION IN BEIRUT DETERIORATED. NATIONAL MOVEMENT JUNMEN SHOT OUT

STORE WINDOWS TO ENFORCE A GENERAL STRIKE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF KAMAL JUNBLATT'S DEATH. KUWAIT AUTHORIZED PAYMENT OF \$18 MILLION TO THE ADF. DIESEL TRUCKERS BRIEFLY WENT ON STRIKE. END SUMMARY.

3. ATTACK AND COUNTERATTACK.

A. ON MARCH 11 FATAH COMMANDOS, APPARENTLY COMING FROM LEBANON, LANDED IN ISRAEL, HIJACKED TWO BUSES AND ENGAGED ISRAELI FORCES IN FIREFIGHTS RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF MORE THAN 30 ISRAELI CIVILIANS.

B. IN RETALIATION, THE ISRAELIS NEAR MIDNIGHT ON MARCH 14 ATTACKED INTO SOUTH LEBANON ALONG SEVERAL AXES. ON MARCH 15 ISRAELI AIRCRAFT HIT TARGETS AT NABATIYAH, TYRE, DAMOUR AND AL AWZA'I NEAR BEIRUT. ISRAELI SHIPS PATROLLED OFF THE COAST AS FAR NORTH AS DAMOUR AND HIT TARGETS ON SHORE, INCLUDING RAS HADIYAH. ALSO ON MARCH 15, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN VISITED ISRAELI TROOPS IN LEBANON. ON MARCH 17, WEIZMAN VISITED MARJUYUN AND GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE.

C. BY MARCH 16 THE ISRAELIS CONTROLLED A STRIP 5 TO 10 KM WIDE NORTH OF THEIR BORDER IN LEBANON AND WEKTING WAS IN THE ARQUB, NEAR HASBAYA.

4. SYRIAN POSTURE.
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SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON HAVE SHOWN NO SIGNS OF JOINING THE FIGHTING ON THE GROUND. SYRIAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT UNITS, HOWEVER, DID FIRE ON THE ISRAELI PLANES THAT ATTACKED AL AWZA'I ON MARCH 15, AND DAMASCUS PROMISED TO SUPPLY THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES (ADF) WITH ADDITIONAL ANTI-AIRCRAFT SUPPORT, ACCORDING TO AN ADF COMMUNIQUE. THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN ALLOWING SUPPLIES AND MEN TO PASS SOUTHWARD THROUGH THEIR LINES TO THE PALESTINISNS. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT LE-JOUR, SYRIA HAS ALSO AGREED TO ALLOW IRAQI EQUIPMENT TO PASS THROUGH SYRIA TO THE PALESTINIANS.

5. CHRISTIAN REACTIONS TO ISRAELI ATTACK.

THE CHRISTIAN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY HAVE BEEN CALM DURING THE ISRAELI ATTACK, AND ACCORDING TO PHALANGE POLITBURO MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI, THE COMMANDER OF THE LEBANES FRONT'S MILITARY FORCES, BACHIR GEMAYEL, DOES NOT INTEND TO INITIATE MILITARY ACTION IN COORDINATION WITH THE ISRAELI ATTACK. PIERRE GEMAYEL ON MARCH 15 AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON MARCH 16 SAID THE

PALESTINIANS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ISRAELI INCURSION.
SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH DECLARED THAT "ISRAELI AGGRESSION
HAS ADDED TO LEBANON'S PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN AGGRESSION,"
AND HE CRITICIZED AMERICA'S LACK OF SUPPORT FOR LEBANON.

6. GOL REACTION.

PRESIDENT SARKIS TOLD THE CABINET ON MARCH 15
THAT THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON LEBANON WAS UNJUSTIFIED,
SINCE ISRAEL HAD PREVENTED THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF LEBANESE AUTHORITY AND THE ENTRY OF
THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE INTO SOUTH LEBANON. THE SAME
DAY LEBANON'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GHASSEN
TUEINI, GAVE SECRETARY GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM A LETTER
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ACCUSING ISRAEL OF "NAKED AGGRESSION."

7. SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

THE SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT HAS DETERIORATED.
ARMED MILITIA HAVE BEGUN TO APPEAR ON THE STREETS OF
WEST BEIRUT, AND ARMED FEDAYEEN HAVE BEEN GUARDING THE
PERIMETER OF SHATILLA CAMP AS WELL AS THE BEACH AREA
NEAR THE AIRPORT. CIVILIAN REFUGEES HAVE BEEN ARRIVING
FROM SOUTH LEBANON AND ILLEGALLY OCCUPYING APARTMENTS
IN THE CITY.

8. JUNBLATT WEEK.

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT ON MARCH 13 BEGAN A WEEK OF
PLANNED EVENTS TO COMMORATE THE ASSASSINATION OF
FORMER PROGRESSIVE SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER KAMAL
JUNBLATT. THE MAIN EVENT WAS TO HAVE BEEN A MASS RALLY
ON MARCH 16, THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH, AT THE INDOOR
STADIUM OF THE CITE SPORTIVE. FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI
ATTACK INTO SOUTH LEBANON, HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL
MOVEMENT POSTPONED THE RALLY UNTIL MAY 1 AND CALLED
FOR A GENERAL STRIKE ON MARCH 16 INSTEAD. WHEN MANY
SHIPS DID NOT CLOSE IN RESPONSE TO THE STRIKE CALL,
NATIONAL MOVEMENT GUNMEN COMBED WEST BEIRUT AND SHOT
OUT THE WINDOWS OF TWO STORES IN THE HAMRA AREA
THAT HAD REMAINED OPEN. ALMOST ALL SHOPS SUBSEQUENTLY
CLOSED, BUT REOPENED ON MARCH 17.

9. ARAB DETERRENT FORCES.

A. KUWAIT HAS AUTHORIZED PAYMENT OF \$18 MILLION
FOR THE ADF EXPENSES FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 77 TO
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APRIL 78 (SEE KUWAIT 1524).

B. THE LEBANESE FRONT MET MARCH 15 AND WAS AGAIN UNABLE TO AGREE ON THE WORDING FOR A STATEMENT ON CONTINUATION OF THE MANDATE OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE. (THE FRONT ON MARCH 8 HAD ISSUED A VAGUE STATEMENT THAT OBSTRUCTION OF THE RIYADH AND CAIRO ACCORDS OF 1976 MIGHT "LEAD TO GRAVE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES MUST BE AWARE." SEE MARCH 9 SITREP.)

10. STRIKE BY DIESEL TRUCKERS.

ON MARCH 14 DIESEL TRUCKERS WENT ON STRIKE TO PROTEST ANTI-DIESEL LEGISLATION AND CREATED TEMPORARY FUEL SHORTAGES IN BEIRUT AS SOME RETAIL GAS STATIONS CLOSED. MINISTER OF INTERIOR SALMAN INTERVENED QUICKLY WITH THE TANK TRUCKERS TO RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL DISTRIBUTION. RETAIL GAS STATIONS REOPENED AT LEGAL PRICES MARCH 17, AS THE DIESEL TRUCKERS, CITING THE NATIONAL SITUATION, SUSPENDED THEIR STRIKE INDEFINITELY.
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